

“Associative Responsibilities, Or Reconceptualizing Political Obligation”
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Abstract

In this paper, I defend the claim that individuals are not necessarily mistaken to believe themselves bound, in some way, to particular political societies. First, I concede to philosophical anarchism, and I accept that states are without legitimacy rights, and that citizens are without political obligations. Rather than admit that citizens are not bound to states, though, this concession actually clears away some of the conceptual debris, and, thus, it enables us to focus more clearly on other ways in which individuals can be bound to particular political societies. Next, I argue that, if we take seriously the right of self-government, it is not unreasonable to believe individuals have a responsibility to belong to associations which help foster and develop their capacities to exercise this right. Assuming that political societies are among such associations, we can then think of this responsibility as one of the moral requirements capable of grounding the duties of citizenship. Finally, I consider how this responsibility measures up against several possible objections, and I argue that it not only provides grounds for believing individuals are bound to particular political societies, but that it also leaves room other moral principles, as well as the political realities these other moral principles tend to ignore.